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From the Editor's Desk

by: P. J. Pazucha

Wanting something doesn't make it happen. Michael Gorbachev has learned that the hard way. He led the Soviet Union through the morass of bureaucracy to the brink of major social change, only to discover that history got ahead of him and by the time you read this the Soviet Union as it has existed for seventy years will be no more. Maybe Christians could learn a few lessons from him.

With this issue the Herald enters its seventy fifth year of publication. What a different world it is from that which spurred its publication.

The Soviets cannot stop feeding their citizens to take time to organize a new nation and followers of Jesus, too, have a primary mandate that cannot be set aside while a few argue about technical points of biblical interpretation. The Master's said: "...ye shall be my witnesses ... unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Being witnesses everyone seems to grasp, even if we don't always like to be witnesses. Sometimes it is inconvenient. Other times it gets in the way of one's career.

It is the part about being *Jesus'* witnesses that seems hardest to implement. Don't look at the churches to see if they are doing what Jesus said. That's too easy an out for us all. After all, you or I cannot change their behavior. Look, instead, at yourself, while I look at myself. Do *you* witness to Jesus? Or do tell people your understanding about what God is going to do in this world? There is a difference! Jesus told us to witness to him. People still need to be fed. Our earthly life is short and our resources are limited. Show people the Savior! He lives forever, and he is the bread of heaven.

On the News Scene

"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come ... and that thou shouldest ... destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). Have Bible Students overlooked the prophetic importance

of ecology, while concentrating on geo-political history? English scientists recently predicted that unless the world drastically changes its management of oxygen resources, massive suffocation will occur within 50 years. What about such influences? Is it time to open new avenues of investigation? Think about it...

In This Issue

In The Value of a Knowledge of God reminds us why the fellowship of footstep followers is so special. May its promises assure you and spur you on to zealous thankfulness.

This issues also presents the first installment of a new series on basic tenets of Christian faith and practice. **A Ransom For All**, takes the form of a question and answer column to treat this important teaching. Also on doctrinal matters, we hope that **Is the Holy Spirit a Person?**, will give new readers something to think about.

Perhaps the greatest privilege of a Christian is **The Privilege of Prayer**, and to share in his insight we recall the words of a brother who lived a life of prayer. Another treat for those who are following in Jesus' footsteps should be **Called Saints**. To be a Called Saint does not imply that there is nothing for saints to do, and thus, **If Ye Do These Things**, takes its place in this issue.

This world is filled with what are called emotional and psychological disorders. Believers have them too. We hope you will find practical counsel in this month's Question Box, **How Can A Christian Overcome Discouragement?**

Finally, **Trust In God** will dare you to question the strength of your own faith. If you find yourself lacking, then use the lessons you learned in **Privilege of Prayer** to grow stronger in faith, trust, and hope.

From the Readers

Putting together the Herald is as much a joy, as it is to hear from readers to it. We try to present a balanced perspective. We accept your pats on the back and your encouragement to spread the Gospel, but that is not the only kind of letter we appreciate.

Objections, corrections, and "how dare yous" are also welcome. We choose articles which we hope may help you see the world, the scriptures, or yourself in a new light, and sometimes it may not always be a flattering one. Occasionally we hit a nerve. If you write about character, some brethren think their doctrines are neglected. Discuss doctrine and they think we have neglected exhortation. Present new thoughts and others are upset because the ideas are different from the ones they are accustomed to. Some ideas bring new readers, others bring cancellations.

Brothers and sisters, we try to present facts and pertinent scriptural ideas. Having done that, *you* must make decisions based on that information. Sometimes you will be uncomfortable with your conclusions. That is unavoidable. Hard choices must be made if you wish to walk in the footsteps of your master.

If you disagree with us, drop us a line.

The Value of a Knowledge of God

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, according as his divine power hash given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness; through the knowledge of him that hath called us by his own glory and virtue."

2 Peter 1:2,3, Siniatic Manuscript *from an article by: C.T. Russell*

To whom were these words addressed? Are they instructions given to sinners? Is this the way by which sinners approach God? No. These instructions are addressed to those already justified through faith in the precious blood of Christ, as indicated in the preceding verse. They are addressed -- "to *them who have obtained like precious faith with us [the apostles] through the righteousness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 1:1, Siniatic Manuscript).

To become a believer in Christ Jesus -- even a justified and fully consecrated believer -- is insufficient. There is to be progress in the new life just begun. Progress should continue as long as we are in this tabernacle (2 Pet. 1:13) so that if we are faithful, this work can be completed in the "first resurrection." The Apostle does not mean annual revivals -- followed by annual backslidings -- but continuing progress in the new life. This contradicts the experience of many who call themselves Christians. Their thoughts are aptly expressed by the lines of the hymn:

Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I found the Lord?
Where is the soul-reviving view of
Jesus and his Word?

The idea prevails that Christians experience alternate periods of subtractions and additions of grace and peace. First they are blessed, and then they lose the blessing. They find the blessing again only to lose it another time. Why does this idea prevail and why do so few understand the "multiplication" principle which the Apostle mentions: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you"?

Many do not know enough to be preserved in the grace and peace found through their primary faith in their Lord as their Redeemer. Much more, they lack sufficient knowledge to multiply their grace and peace. The Apostle Paul's words apply to many believers, "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*" (1 Cor. 3:1);

"...For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat" (Heb. 5:12).

One error often leads a person to adopt other errors. The doctrine of eternal torment as the penalty for the fall (from which only believers will escape) distorts the judgment and misdirects the efforts of many sincere believers. The first thought of some is for their personal escape from eternal torment. Their second thought is to assist as many as possible to escape such an awful eternity. With this idea as the mainspring of conduct, we cannot wonder why so many work the hardest for the "saving of sinners," bringing them into the condition of being "babes in Christ." After they become babes comparatively little is done to develop them in the knowledge of God. They receive little help in growing up into maturity in Christ. As babes they are fed the

milk of the word. They are unused to strong meat so that when they attempt to consume it, they are more likely to be choked by it than to be strengthened.

Building Upon A Proper Foundation

The Apostle points out the course of development by which the believer, having started in this pathway, can continue developing -- multiplying his grace and peace. It is important, however, that the believer begin his path correctly. He must be begotten by the word of truth (Col. 1:5) into the faith which had been delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). It is this faith which the Apostle here terms precious faith.

This is not the faith of critics and theologians. Their faith is far from precious. Their faith denies the fall of man, denies the ransom for man and all necessity for it, and consequently denies the resurrection which is based upon that ransom. Their "faith" consists in believing in their own judgments as the criteria for truth and error, for they doubt the testimony of Moses and the Prophets, and of the Lord and his apostles. Those who build on this foundation are not the Apostle's audience. We need not expect that their grace or peace will multiply. We trust, however, that the majority of our readers are not of these. We trust that you can sing these words with understanding:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand:
All other ground is sinking sand.

The foundation upon which the Scriptures teach us to build is faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: faith that his sacrifice for sin was once for all, a full and complete ransom for Adam and all his posterity, so that all of these (in due time they shall all be brought to a knowledge of Christ) may obtain cleansing and eternal life under the terms of the New Covenant. Those who build upon this foundation may multiply their grace and peace. How, you ask?

The Apostle answers, "*through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*" (2 Pet. 1:2). At first it may seem that these words mean little, that they indicate only our coming to know that there is a God and that there is a Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But the knowledge of God means more than this. It means to have an intimate acquaintance with the Father and the Son, a knowledge of the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) which is the full representation of the mind of the Father. We learn these things by studying the Word of God, by discerning through that word the principles which govern the Divine conduct, the way in which God's justice, wisdom, love, and power operate. These are progressive studies. Something may be learned the first day of our Christian experience, but the end of the first year should show progress in knowing the Divine mind, and subsequent years should show further increase.

As our intimate knowledge of God's plan and character increases so must our grace increase. Those who do not attempt to live in harmony with what they have seen of God's character will soon lose interest in such knowledge. Those who have the interest which leads to further study must continue to grow in grace. As they grow in grace, they will grow in peace. Peace is also progressive. We had peace when we first found the Lord and realized the forgiveness of our sins; but those who made progress in the knowledge of the Divine plan and character find their peace increasing. Those who have progressed some time in the good way speak of it in the language of the apostles. It is realized in their hearts as the "*peace of God which passeth all understanding*" (Phil. 4:7).

Intimacy With God

Divine power in all things pertaining to the things of life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) is imparted to us as we grow in the knowledge of God. What an assurance! This statement of the importance of knowledge in Christian development reminds us of the words of our Lord, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). To know God as the Apostle here explains signifies an intimate acquaintance with him who called us by his own glory and virtue. Only as we understand his greatness and perfection are we able to estimate our corresponding littleness and imperfection; only as we see his gracious beauty can we become acquainted with grace and virtue. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has a cleansing and sanctifying effect upon our hearts. Thus the Apostle prays for some to grow in the knowledge of God so that they would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints, the extent of the love of Christ which surpasses human understanding (Phil. 4:7). Those who, even dimly, behold God's character are changed by it -- from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

This thought is illustrated photographically. No photograph exists without a piece of sensitized film. Not any piece of film can be used, it must be prepared for that purpose. Our hearts, likewise, must be prepared by repentance and justifying faith in God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Only after this can we receive the image of the divine character upon our heart. The next step in making a photograph is to place the film in a place to receive focused light -- considering distance and position. Similarly, the heart must be in the proper attitude. Full consecration to God and a desire to have his will done in our lives are necessary to receive the impress of his character. The third step is to remove all obstruction from the path of the light, allowing it to shine on the film. Once again there is a counterpart. The knowledge of God scatters all darkness -- error and sin -- shining upon our features and impressing us with his character. The photographic film must then be processed, subjected to chemicals to develop the likeness on the film. Again, in our hearts there is a developing work which corresponds to that of the film. We require fiery trials (1 Pet. 4:12) which develop the likeness of God in us. Finally, we find that while photographs may

be taken without the use of precious metals (gold and silver), their image is not retained as long unless precious materials are used. As we have seen elsewhere, gold is an apt representation of God's nature, and silver is an appropriate representation of truth. Only as the likeness of our Lord is fixed in our hearts upon the basis of truth and the divine nature can a lasting likeness be expected (Rom. 8:29).

Darkness Hates Light

The world does not know God (Rom. 1:21). Evidently, a great many professing believers also do not know him. Paul makes this point, saying that the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) is interested in hindering unbelievers from obtaining that understanding of the Lord's character and plan which will impress itself upon their hearts. He wants to prevent the light of the glorious gospel from shining upon them. Here is a constant battle. The dark is fighting against the light, as our Lord explained, *"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved"* (John 3:20). Those who obey God are spoken of as the children of light (1 Thess. 5:5). After their hearts have been impressed with the image of the Lord, such become light bearers to others. Shining out to those with whom they come in contact, they reflect the light of the divine character which is as yet unseen and unappreciated by the world at large.

Today the Lord's people are like lights set upon a hill. Their light shines into the darkness, and the darkness does not appreciate it (John 1:5). It was true of our Master, and it will be true of us. But of the time of his kingdom it is written, *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13:43). Then shall *"the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..."* (Mal. 4:2). This will be the great Millennial day. As a result of the church's shining then, we are assured that all darkness will disappear and that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth (Isa. 11:9).

In order to obtain this multiplying knowledge, God gave us exceeding great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4) for encouragement. Many of our fellow Christians know little of these promises. If we inquire about the faith of many persons, we are told that their belief is that by the grace of God, if they are faithful, they will escape an eternity of torment and go to heaven. Many would add, if prodded, that if they could just get into heaven they would be satisfied.

What manner of answer is this? Do such know nothing of the *"exceeding great and precious promises"* of God towards his faithful? Unfortunately, it seems they do not, and they are left to ask, "What are these promises? Who knows about them?"

Having These Promises Dearly Beloved

Those who follow the pathway Peter marks out have the promises. These multiply their grace and peace through a growing, intimate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. These seek a clearer understanding of God's character and plan. The hearts of these believers are submissive and impressionable, they are eager to be transformed into the divine image -- as they see it in the likeness of the express image of the Father: the only begotten son (Rom. 8:29). These wonderful promises stand before such persons as the light of their lives. To all others the Word of God is but -- a dark and meaningless book.

What Are the Promises?

There are many, but we will mention a few specifically.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

"...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:2,3).

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (John 17:24).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

"And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

"[Begotten] to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:4,5).

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron". (Rev. 2:26, 27).

"Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:5, 6).

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

These kings and priests are to reign according to the original promise made to God's faithful, "*and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3). One more promise is that Israel is to obtain mercy and blessing through the dominion and mercy of these kings and *priests*, "*For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*" (Rom. 11:32).

God's Love Surpasses Knowledge

All these promises are summarized in one statement by Peter. Through these precious promises God determines to give to some who were at one time children of wrath the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Oh what a promise is here! How exceedingly great and precious this is! Who would dare imagine such a thing had not God authorized such hope. We might have reason to hope that our human creature would be perfected, restoring the earthly image of God. Possibly, as some have sung, we could dream to be like the angels and to stand with them. But although the angelic nature is superior to the human our God has not been content with offering his elect even this wonderful possibility. In his grace and through the wealth of riches at his disposal, he has planned a reward beyond the flight of any human fancy. He has promised to this little flock -- to whom it is his good pleasure to give the kingdom -- the Bride, the Lamb's wife, a share in divine glory and the divine nature of her Lord, as well as a share in his heavenly kingdom.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. We do not know why God would exalt any creature to be like him. We are creatures of the dust, no matter how wonderful men are. But this and all God's gracious promises exhibit the heights and breadth of the love of our God, which surpasses human knowledge.

As our Creator is revealed to us, partly through our Lord and Redeemer, we come to learn more of his character. The more we learn the more we are willing to "*press toward the mark*" (Phil. 3:14) for whatever he might be pleased to reveal of himself to us. We find that we yearn to be like him. We want to please him and to be acceptable -- actually and for ever. What other attitude can we have if we appreciate the exceeding great and precious promises?

There is a real and proper inspiration found in these promises. Love, obedience, and self sacrifice suddenly seem less difficult to us because he called us to be like him. The Apostle said it best, "*He who hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*" (1 John 3:3).

The Apostle Paul referred to this intimate knowledge of the Lord when he wrote to Philippi, saying,

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ... That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection [the First or Chief Resurrection], and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death [a full surrender which is possible to those only who know Him well and have drunk in His spirit]" (Phil. 3:8,10).

Oh, God...

Oh, God, when I have food
 help me to remember the hungry,
When I have work
 help me to remember the jobless,
When I have a warm home
 help me to remember the homeless
When I am without pain
 help me to remember those who suffer;
And remembering
 help me to destroy my complacency and bestir my compassion.
Make me concerned enough
 to help by word and deed,
Those who cry out
 for what we take for granted.

True Charity

C.S. Lewis didn't talk about percentage giving. He said the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. Our charities should pinch and hamper us.

If we live at the same level of affluence as other people who have our income, we are probably giving away too little.

Obstacles to charity include greed for luxurious living, greed for money itself, fear of financial security, and showy pride.

- Kathryn Ann Lindskoog

A Ransom For All

"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times."

1 Timothy 2:5,6, ASV

All Scripture citations are given from the American Standard Version.

Question: What is a ransom?

Answer: A ransom may be defined as the price necessary to secure the release of a person, property, etc. It is most frequently applied to cases of captivity or detention. In religious matters it specifically applies to the price necessary to release man from sin and its consequences.

Question: What is the scope of those persons needing a ransom?

Answer: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

"Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God. They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psa. 14:2,3).

Question: Has a "ransom" price been provided?

Answer: "For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Tim. 1:15).

Question: For whom is this God -- provided ransom price made?

Answer: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32).

"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times" (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

"But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3: 22).

Question: How does someone take advantage of the ransom price provided in Christ Jesus?

Answer: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6: 44,45)

" . . . ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2: 12).

Question: Does that mean that men have to do something to gain everlasting life?

Answer: -- "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6: 47, KJV).

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then

shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?..." (Rom. 10:12-14).

"Jesus saith unto him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me'" (John 14:6).

"...be it known unto you ... that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:10,12).

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Question: Will every person at this time accept the ransom God has provided through Jesus Christ?

Answer: No. "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:38).

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

"And he said unto them, 'Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God. but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them'" (Mark 4:11-12).

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:11, 12).

Question: If all do not at this time accept the ransom for all, how is it that salvation obtains for all?

Answer: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:31, 32).

"I will ransom them from the power of Sheol [the grave]; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol [grave], where is thy destruction?... (Hosea 13:14).

"Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust,, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

"and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it" (Isaiah 40:5).

"Jehovah hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:10).

"And the angel said unto them, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people...'" (Luke 2:10).

"...'Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

"...Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world. he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live... Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice" (John 5:25, 28).

Question: There appears, on the basis of your scriptures, to be two different salvations. Is this true? Do the Scriptures distinguish between a little flock of believers and another group called "all" or "many"?

Answer: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint -- heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:16,17, KJv). "Yet seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"(Luke 12:31, 32). "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ ... And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:26, 27, 29).*

* See also Romans 8:16-22; Rev. 1:6; 5:10

Question: What part does the promise to Abraham play in the ransom?

Answer: The believers of the Gospel Age will be with Jesus during the next age to serve him in any capacity. That age will be the kingdom of Messiah foretold by all the Holy Prophets. **

"...neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9:7).

"Even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Heb. 11:18). "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise" (Gal. 4:28). "...who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; who in times past were no people, but now are the people of God.. who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

** For a complete reading of the promise given to Abraham, see: Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:4,14; 21:12

Question: In summation then, for whom is the ransom?

Answer: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21,22).

"...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

"For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God... For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:19,22).***

*** See also Isa. 2:2-4; 35; Isa. 40:5; Joel 2:28

*Great minds talk about ideas,
Average minds talk about things,
Small minds talk about other people.*

Called Saints

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." - Colossians 1:12

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17

by: Fred A. Essler

Why do so many people think that reading the Bible is a waste of time? Try as they might, they cannot understand what they read nor can they decipher any consistent message in its contents?

There is a reason for this. The Scriptures, the New Testament in particular, were primarily written for one group. Its message concentrates of areas of concern only to them. Note the address of the letter of Paul to the Romans: to "*...all that be at Rome,*" is qualified by the words "beloved of God, called to be saints." Similarly, the first epistle to the Corinthians is written to "*...the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.*"

What is a saint? Men generally think it refers to someone canonized by a council of the Roman Catholic Church. Such are judged as having become, during his earthly lifetime, almost sinless. Sometimes they are persons who rendered service to the church or who were martyred for their faith.

But the Apostle Paul, writing most of the epistles which constitute the New Testament, used "saint" to designate all who "*...call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" The expression "called to be saints" suggests that this calling is to be a saint in the afterlife. Observe that the words "to be" in the Authorized Version are in italics. Such italicized words were supplied by the translators to give what they considered to be fluency in reading. These italicized words are not found in the ancient manuscripts. Therefore, omitting the words "to be," we read the text as it was written, "called saints." This calling applies both now and in the afterlife. Such an interpretation is confirmed by letter to the Philippians (Phil. 1:1) which was written "*to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.*" This text clearly is not meant for a special few who might be outstanding in their worship and service because the salutation goes on to mention such special ones individually, the bishops and deacons.

What Is a Saint?

Our language includes words from other tongues -- Latin, German, French, Greek. The Old Testament lists about 8000 Hebrew words, while an English dictionary lists over 240,000 words. In English we often draw upon a variety of words to express subtle shades of meaning. Many languages do not have this variety and have only one word with which to express the idea of a "saint"; that is, one who is "made holy." "Saint" comes from the Latin *sanctus*, from which also derive the words *sanctify* and *sanctification*.

"Sanctify" as used in the Old Testament may help us understand what the word "saint" means. Things, days, persons, and offices were sanctified. They were set apart for a specific purpose in the worship of Jehovah.

Aaron was a sanctified man. This was not because he was specially righteous (who was it who made the golden calf and led in its worship?) but because God set him apart for the High

Priesthood. Aaron was the only person who could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement with the blood of the sin offering. Aaron alone could wear the garments of "glory and beauty" which themselves were holy garments, sanctified to be worn on special occasions.

The tabernacle, with all its components, was sanctified for no other purpose than for carrying out the rituals of worship. The ground on which the tabernacle was erected was sanctified as long as the tabernacle occupied that space.

Certain days were sanctified, such as the seventh day, the new moon, the passover week, the Day of Atonement, etc. The nation of Israel was sanctified -- a holy nation set apart from all other peoples of the earth to be witnesses for one God and to be light bearers of the law of righteousness and truth to other nations (Deut. 4:1-8; Isa. 53:10).

Apply this understanding of what it means to be sanctified to the expression *"all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"* A saint is one who is holy, set apart, sanctified for the worship and service of God.

Adam Was Not a Saint

True, *"God created man in his own image"* (Gen. 1:27). *"And God saw everything that he had made and, behold, it was very good"* (Gen. 1:31).

Although he was pronounced "very good" (as though proceeding fresh from the creative power of God) Adam was not a saint.

In order to understand why Adam was not a saint we must understand the situation in Eden before the temptation and disobedience. Our first parents simply obeyed the laws implanted in them just as every order of creation acts according to the laws of its nature.

This is illustrated by the robin that migrates south as cold weather approaches and north again as Spring arrives. Who taught it this cycle? Who taught it to build its nest in the crotch of a pear tree, or apple, or cherry, and not to put its nest in the swaying branches of the willow as do the orioles? Robins build nests just like other robins have done from the beginning of creation: with bits of grass, hair, string, or whatever material they can find. There are capable engineers and artisans in the world, but not one of them can build a nest like a robin, who has no education and no instruction -- responding only to an implanted law within its being.

So it was with the man Adam. Before his disobedience he obeyed the laws of his nature. He did not try to be perfect, he was perfect in all his created parts and instincts. When God tested him Adam failed to set himself apart to his Creator's expressed will. By this he deliberately disobeyed. Thus, Adam was not a saint, not a sanctified or "set apart" man.

Adam Struggled and Fell

Where there is a strong will to live there is no desire to die, to cease to exist. Life abhors death. No young person who enjoys the vigor of life contemplates dying. Every fiber of their being results in living.

How much more would Adam have clung to life. Adam possessed an undeteriorated life force and unlimited time in which to investigate the secrets of the earth, of nature, and of the universe

of which he was a part. All these he could enjoy with the sweetness of communion with his Creator. His every instinct would be to live!

The transgression in Eden was not merely that Eve ate an apple, gave one to Adam, and then God sentenced them to death for these actions. God did not arbitrarily penalize Adam and Eve. Quite to the contrary. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and the terms he gave them for continued life. They thus estranged themselves from the Source of their life. They were penalized upon the basis of their actions. God had told them: *"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:17), and die they did.

Adam must have struggled terribly to bring himself to do what he knew to be contrary to the expressed will of his Creator; contrary to his own instincts. We do not know how long this struggle lasted. Adam yielded to disobedience. In yielding, he introduced a seed of disobedience which has been passed on from parent to child ever since: we are all "sold under sin." Disease, calamity, death: these are the results of estrangement with God, the source of all life. "In Adam all die."

How Do We Become Saints?

"...all *have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" These words being true how do we become saints? First we must realize that we are children of wrath (cp. Eph. 2:1-3). There must be a change of nature if we are to live. *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). The adamic nature is blind to spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14) and is not inclined to subject itself to God's authority (Rom. 8:6-8). In fact, a man's nature is opposed to God. This change of nature is not a reformation of the old -- which Paul calls the old man. Nor is this change the old nature with a better, informed mind. We must be transformed, completely changed over to a new mind, a new will, a new heart (Rom. 12:1,2).

How and where does this occur? We might illustrate with the story of Moses and the burning bush (Ex. 3:4-6). Moses heard a voice speaking to him: "'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'" So, the ground on which we stand before God is holy: not the material earth but the spiritual ground of our acceptance before God. *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [from the Greek word meaning "propitiatory" or "mercy seat"] through faith in his blood"* (Rom. 3:24,25).

Here is the secret of reconciliation. God recognizes the sacrifice of Christ because God sent the son into the world to accomplish our redemption. Being aware of our estrangement from God, we confess our faith in Christ's sacrifice as the basis of reconciliation. Here we meet God and God meets us. Truly holy ground, but spiritual, not earthly. Christ assumed the place of the sinful nature and *"was made a sin -- offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21).

Christ not only died for our sins, he was also raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). Being baptized into Christ signifies having been raised with him to walk in a new life, a dedicated, a consecrated life. Henceforth we are not to *"walk after the flesh, but after the spirit"* (Rom. 8:1, 4). This constitutes us saints, sanctified ones, set apart ones.

A New Creation

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away,, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). So simply, we are made new. What about that old man that we still have to deal with? The Apostle tells us what to do.

Put off ... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:22-24, KJV).

Again he says:

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:9,10).

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things -- and the things that are not -- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (1 Cor. 1:26-29, NIV).

Many saints are called from the lowest strata of society, but they stand on equal footing before God with the fairest of those who have responded to the call to sanctification (Rom. 12:1,2). For each human being Christ Jesus is made their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). It is doing the will of God from the heart that marks one as a saint, a new creation, no matter how imperfectly the will of God is done.

An incident from Jesus' life might well illustrate the point. He had been teaching in a home and ...while he yet talked to the people ...one said unto him, "behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak to thee." But he answered and said unto him... "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:46-50)

Victorious Saints

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:12,13).

This "let not" implies that we are now in a position to make a decision as to whom we shall obey. In times past we did not submit ourselves to God. We were not even concerned with such submission. Previous to our reconciliation we were under the law or rule of sin, *"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"* (Eph. 2:3).

Formerly, even though we strove against sin and uncleanness, we were aware that because of our weak will we were unable to lift ourselves out of the degrading tendencies we had because of our adamic nature. The habits acquired over years broke any resistance we had to our failures. We

had yielded ourselves "...servants to uncleanness and to iniquity" (Rom. 6:19) which always resulted in more iniquity. We were prey to all kinds of wickedness because of our fallen nature, accentuated by our willful ways. We were *"like a city that is broken down, and without walls"* (Prov. 25:28).

Now a strong wall has to be erected -- a tendency to resist temptation and to obey the will of God when an issue involving that will is placed before us. What we have in Christ is the new spirit of life, a spirit that helps our infirmities (Rom. 8:26), for:

"...if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

Here is adequate power to give victory over each temptation.

It is no sin to be tempted. The old man, though counted as dead (Rom. 6:11,12), does not submit to the new mind of the spirit without resistance. Each temptation is an opportunity to exercise godliness and to gain victory over the old man.

Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin.
Each victory will help you
Some other to win.

So allow the Lord to build up a wall of resistance against yielding, and thus shall you grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. Fortify the new mind in the will of God. One may not realize it at first, but *"it is*

God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess. 5:23).

The Privilege of Prayer

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. - Psalm 37:5
by: A. L. Muir

Why pray? Prayer implies that a person feels they have enough intimacy in their relationship with God that they are welcome in his presence. This two way relationship explains the scriptural picture of prayer as sweet incense. Revelation (Rev. 5:8) portrays the prayers of saints as appeals poured out to God which God accepts as though he were a parent receiving the gift of his child.

Who can pray? Prayer fulfills a purpose and only some of mankind can benefit from that purpose. Anyone who has forsaken sin and has accepted Christ Jesus as their Savior is eligible to approach God's throne. That approach is to facilitate a specific purpose: that they *"may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:16).

Only those who are accepted in the Beloved can call Jehovah by the endearing term "father." This was the pattern that Jesus gave us -- *"Our Father which art in heaven"* (Luke 11:2). It is a relationship that belongs to those who are adopted as God's children out of the alienation of sin. This Paul explains in detail in Romans (especially Romans 8) which you may wish to review at your leisure.

With this background let's review the basic assumptions that accompany a voice uplifted in prayer. Prayer is an act of faith in Jehovah. Prayer is a realization of mankind's dependence upon God. If you pray you are acknowledging that you have been reconciled to God through Christ Jesus. Not only is one acknowledging their reconciliation, they are also admitting that they accept it by faith, that is, they do not doubt that God has forgiven them if they have approached him in the appointed way: through Jesus Christ the Lord.

Our Family

Still more is meant when one opens their heart in prayer. To pray is to admit that you are part of a family. Jesus taught us to pray to "Our Father..." Therefore, it is assumed that whoever approaches God will have some interest in the other members of God's family. (In fact, the degree of your interest is something that should grow as the believer spends time in secret with God.) If you were formerly selfish you must now put aside your concern for self if you think to approach the Lord of all creation. You must realize that you are one of God's many children and they share the same privilege of access to God that you enjoy. There is a special kinship here, one to be enjoyed and nurtured. God's people can approach him alone, or when they assemble together.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19,20, NIV).

Prayer changes as a believer changes. Growth in grace, in knowledge, and in love will deepen your appreciation of prayer. It will never replace the *serious* study of God's Word as a source of understanding God's diversity and complexity. Prayer will, however, bring wisdom to the understanding you gain by study. Study teaches you what God is and does; prayer gives form to your appreciation for him. A wondrous transformation takes place as you convert what you have read into thanksgiving for his mercies, into communion about your trials, and into assurances to

God of your confidence in his biblical promises and in his power to fulfill them all. *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess. 5:16-18, NIV).

Not My Will

A person does not know what to pray about immediately upon accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. A person learns what to pray about as they learn about God. God's love and purposes are more expansive than anything you can imagine. That is why you are invited to ask for anything you choose with the assurance that God will answer your prayer. *Note*, however, the provision in this carte blanche invitation. We have already described who may approach God in confidence. The Lord knows that all such persons will ask according to his will. Hence, the promise is only made to those who are *in* Christ and in whom the Word of promise *abides* richly. Anyone who truly accepts Christ will learn, in coming to that acceptance, that God's ways are higher than their own (Isa. 55:8) and that they are to be preferred in every way. That is why the sentiment, *"Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done"* (Luke 22:42), so often finds its way into *effective* prayers.

If you are trying to guide your life by God's revealed will, prayer will become increasingly important in your life. *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight"* (Prov. 3:6, NASB). *"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psa. 37:4, NIV).

This "attitude" of prayer should not replace the more formal, private, approach to the throne of grace on bended knee. Whoever does not embrace this privilege misses a great blessing ordained by God for their blessing and assistance in the narrow way of discipleship to Christ Jesus.

Our Lord spent time alone in prayer and we do well to copy him. Some of his prayers were public. These we have recorded for our benefit. They exemplify the special fellowship we too can enjoy when a group of believers approach the throne of grace together.

If the *privilege* of prayer has sunk in, its exclusivity and its access to the Almighty will take on ever deeper meaning. Not only so, the privilege of prayer will be held with greater reverence.

Request Forgiveness

Jesus' one sacrifice was all sufficient. It atones for our past sins. Also, by his continuing priesthood, it cleanses us from our failures along the way to the Kingdom. God could apply Jesus' merit to these blemishes and excuse us for them without requiring us to mention them at all. For our sake he chose not to do things that way. We must apply for forgiveness for our failures in the name of Jesus. In doing so, we benefit as believers. We learn to recognize our failures and by that alertness are better able to wage war against them. We are reminded of our dependence on Christ's precious blood, and are humbled in the process. Finally, appreciating our own debt to God's forgiveness, we should grow correspondingly more generous and merciful towards our own debtors.

God chose conditions for prayer that point us in the direction of righteousness and which assist us in our pursuit of a Christlike character. Only the Christlike will be fit to be inheritors with Jesus of the Kingdom. The trials we endure are designed to form in us the "New Creature" which

Paul says God is creating in us. Therefore, it is not appropriate for us to pray that God would spare us from them. *"If you are not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children, and not true sons"* (Heb. 12:8, NIV).

Teach Us To Pray

Have you ever heard it said that "no one needs instruction in how to pray"? This idea, growing in popularity, is not taught by the New Testament.

There are proper and improper prayers. Mistakes have been made as to who may pray and as to what may be properly prayed for. In Luke 11 our Lord outlines a proper form of prayer. It begins with praise and thanksgiving and proceeds to expressions of confidence in God and in the promises of his Kingdom. Following that come acknowledgments of the believer's dependence upon God: upon his daily provisions. The prayer ends with confidence in God's power and his goodness to protect, and ultimately to deliver, his child.

This is the general form which our Lord commends to us. It is a proper way to approach God.

It is interesting to note that the Lord does not wait until we become proficient in using either language or the forms of petitioning him.

He is generously understanding so that we can come to him imperfectly, with stammering tongues, to confide in him our devotion and appreciation in any way we please. *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us..."* (Rom. 8:26, NIV).

We are expected to ask for God's blessings so that in asking we may feel our need. Having asked, we then learn to look for God's response. This dual influence affects us every time we ask and it strengthens our progress towards Christlikeness. We are encouraged to seek God's keeping power in trouble and his supervision in all our affairs so that we continually approach God daily, hourly, even moment by moment. Watching and praying in this mood, we learn to apply to ourselves his scriptural promises with greater confidence. *"And we know that all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28, NIV). If you achieve this trust, rest assured that blessings are on the way. Sometimes they come one way, sometimes another. You may find that they do not come in the ways you anticipated, and frequently you will find that they are larger than you requested.

Our experience teaches us that severe trials and disappointments work out great changes in character. The work of the holy Spirit probably could not proceed as well were those experiences less severe.

For this reason, patience is important when you pray. Wait patiently for blessing and seek it out so that you recognize his blessing when he answers your prayer. What is the holy Spirit like? You will remember it to be meek, gentle, patient, longsuffering, kind, and loving. Considering these characteristics, one might ask, How else could God work these traits into our personality if he did not allow us the experiences which will develop them.

*O Lord, they sought Thee in distress;
They could only whisper a prayer,
Your chastening was upon them* (Isa. 26:16, NASB).

Prayer is multifaceted. One aspect of prayer is communion with God. Our modern life is very efficient and people display a marvelous enthusiasm for work, but our activity has come at serious cost: spiritual shallowness. In part, this condition arises among people for whom prayer is an occasional act and not a habitual attitude.

*My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
When I remember Thee on my bed,
I meditate on Thee in the night watches,
For Thou hast been my help,
And in the shadow of Thy wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to Thee,
Thy right hand upholds me. (Psa. 63:5-8, NASB).*

It is easy to associate prayer with special postures or requests with specific wants. To Jesus prayer was communion or fellowship with his Father. He prayed with such power that his disciples asked him to teach them to pray as he did. They observed that prayer transformed him; his conscious joy was so great that at times his physical appearance changed from the sheer glory of it.

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning (Luke 9:28,29, NIV).

Thus our Lord underscored the true communion of prayer. He was undisturbed by life's problems, those same kind of problems which so often confuse and preoccupy us. Prayer brought him serenity, joy, vision and peace because he abode in the presence of God. Jude expresses the same thought: "*Keep yourselves in the love of God*" (Jude 21).

Daniel's Noble Example

The Old Testament contains a striking example of this aspect of prayer. The sixth chapter of Daniel describes the prophet's way of dealing with a crisis in his life (Dan. 6:10-23). Daniel's enemies were scheming to destroy him, but even after their new law was sanctioned by the king he worshiped exactly as he had done before. Three times a day he knelt before the Lord in prayer, thanksgiving, and supplication. This he did with his windows open toward Jerusalem, expecting that the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation were about to be fulfilled.

Merely closing his eyes in prayer after he had retired to rest was not enough for Daniel, even though many people living under the greater light of the Gospel Age and its privileges seem satisfied to do just that. Daniel had a great God. His God was worthy of reverence and worship and Daniel was man enough to appreciate that it was a privilege to commune with his Creator. Daniel saw no shame in being seen bowing his knee to the Almighty and he was unwilling to assume a less humble position before God than he assumed toward earthly kings.

What happens when you are tired and weary from the day's activities? Many people just decide that they are too tired to pray, or they say that another time would be better for their concentration. This is one way to show God that we are overcharged with the cares of this life. Can it be that someone who knows that their life has been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus can be so engrossed with this world that they forget him from whom comes every good and perfect gift? God forbid that we should ever fall to such a state!

Other reasons are possible for laxity in prayer and it may be that sin lies at the door. A person who has been doing things they should not do might not want to enter the presence of the Great Judge. Perhaps some other source of coldness has affected them which seems to distance them from God and they continue on their course until prayer becomes first a mere formality and ultimately is abandoned altogether.

If you are a child of God and you dwell close to him you will feed on him. Not only will you yearn to listen to his Word, you will also joy to offer him thanksgiving and worship. These feelings will grow as sure and as strong as your need for physical food and drink.

Sometimes God is pleased to deliver his own in wondrous ways. Daniel enjoyed such a deliverance. But many times his deliverance comes in other ways, such as the deliverance of Stephen (Acts. 7:54-60). How can a person learn both of these lessons? You must have absolute confidence in God, whether the circumstance be monumental or minute.

Jesus was tempted in such matters, just like we are. On one occasion he was prompted to take unnecessarily hazardous actions -- to leap from the pinnacle of the temple. Frequently, Satan tempts the Lord's people to attempt foolish, impossible, or unnecessary things simply to show their faith. If you are so tempted take a lesson from the Lord's reply: "*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*" (Matt. 4:7). We should neither tempt God, nor expect miracles where God's plans have not made them necessary.

Your Heavenly Father Knows

Christians should not think that they pray in order to tell God anything he doesn't know, nor to call his attention to things we think he might have overlooked. On the contrary, prayer benefits the believer himself. God withholds many blessings until we approach him in prayer to ask for them. Thus, we demonstrate to him our dependence upon him. We do not commune with him to induce God to give us things which he chooses to withhold. Our prayers should focus on obtaining what he wants to give us, what he has promised to give us, and what he is more willing to give than to withhold.

In addition to the favors we asked and received, prayer brings us into harmony with the Lord. When we learn this, we learn to enjoy one of our greatest privileges and blessings.

Another facet of prayer is the living belief in God's care for the individual.

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety nine on the hills and look for the one that wandered *off*? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety nine that did not wander *off*. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matt. 18:12-14, NIV).

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29-31, NIV).

The Bible as a Book of Prayer Examples

The Bible is preeminently a book of prayer. Our Father knows all the stars by name (Psa. 147:4). He numbers the hairs of our head (Matt. 10:30), remembers all the sparrows (Luke 12:6), and calls his own sheep by name (John 10:3) so that none of his children should perish (Matt. 18:14).

These beautiful suggestions are easy to speak about and wonderful to contemplate, but can we make it real to ourself that he who sustains the milky way and who controls Orion and the Pleiades also knows us by name? The psalmist entertained the same question and wrote this:

*When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
What is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him? (Psa. 8:3,4, NIV)*

As the Lord's children learn more about God's grace they may think of their Father as something like a librarian. The untrained mind, looking at rows of books on all subjects, sees an undistinguished mass. The lover of books knows each one by name, however. Each volume has special associations: edition, value, contents, author and purpose, and so he looks upon books as units.

Similarly, our Father is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. David expressed it this way, *"I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation; I will praise Thee among a mighty throng"* (Psa. 35:18). First, we must satisfy our mind that God exercises individual care over his children. Secondly, we must experience that care. We acknowledge his daily guidance, the consciousness of his resources, and the sustaining sense of God's presence as we abide in habitual communion with him.

Delay

There are times when the Lord may temporarily ignore our petitions. In doing so, his delays helps us grow more earnest in our prayers. When we pray in keeping with the revealed will of God we should find that our recognition of the Lord's delay in answering our requests causes our faith to increase. Through delay we learn to appreciate the magnitude of the blessing we are seeking.

Alternately, the Lord may test our humility before he answers our prayer. Are we humble enough? Have we faith enough to believe the Lord? Can we trust him for grace? Do we realize that we are nothing before him and have no merit of our own to plead with him? If so, we may be sure that the Lord appreciates our faith, demonstrated by our childlike clinging to his loving hand.

Hezekiah's Experience

We have an illustration of these matters in the life of Hezekiah, king of Judah, as recorded in 2 Kings 19. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, had sent his representative to Hezekiah with boastful letters about his conquests and demanding the surrender of Judah.

Hezekiah decided upon the course of least resistance and became a vassal of Sennacherib. He paid annual tribute and sent him presents of gold, silver, and ivory, including ornaments from

the temple. In spite of this, the Assyrian power pressured Judah sufficiently that Hezekiah finally did what he should have done initially. After consulting with Isaiah, he laid the letter from Sennacherib before the Lord and asked for God's mercy and guidance toward his covenanted people. The answer was that Sennacherib was completely in the Lord's power and that Israel should not be afraid.

Never lose sight of the power the Lord can use on behalf of his people. However threatening or dark the evil that besets us, he is always there. It is sad when Christians purchase peace with things consecrated to the Lord -- when they compromise the truth.

For example, how many willingly appease their alienated friend, or neighbor, or employer with a more worldly course -- subtracting time, influence, and means from the consecration which gave them to the Lord. How often do we give considerable portions of our substance to worldly service just to secure domestic peace, social advancement, or commercial prosperity. Those of the Lord's people who stoop to such actions may find that he may bring upon them the very difficulties they fear and seek to avert by such compromise.

The Cost of Prayer

What are the costs of prayer? Most evidently there is the general preparation of good living and proper thought, but other special preparations are also required. *"Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God"* (Eccl. 5:2, NIV).

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true.. whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things (Phil. 4:6-8, NIV).

These words from Paul set a tone that we often find violated by suppliants. Sometimes we rashly and hastily rush into God's presence. Our mind is unprepared and our mind is preoccupied. Worse still, we may approach him without examining our heart. If we follow Paul's example we can have a more effective prayer life and we will find our spirit will be more at ease.

We dare not approach the throne of grace without realizing we are in the presence of God Almighty! Yet, what an utter sense of futility must accompany prayers that have not this appreciation; what fruitlessness there must be -- as though one were speaking in the dark to nobody, while a friend was in the room.

The practice of God's presence is not as simple as the words sound. Yet, the Lord himself said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:8).

If we are having a hard time feeling -- that is, recognizing -- God's presence with us in our prayer closet, there are correctable reasons. We need to pay careful attention to our attitudes. If we regard prayer as a duty we cannot enter into the fullness of life's supreme privilege -- sonship with the Father. The commonness of prayer can also be a problem. Just because we can approach God at any time or in any place does not rob prayer of the intimate contact with God and we need remind ourselves of that. We can also lose the benefits of communion because of negligence on our part. Deceiving influences can also steal away our good intentions and hinder us in prayer. Impatience also accounts for many failures in prayer; just because we see no immediate results is no reason to assume that our prayers are fruitless.

If we intend to gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus we are going to have to lose some things in this world:

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ -- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Phil. 3:7-9, NIV).

Every child of God must give up some of this world if he is to offer acceptable prayers to God. Our mind must be disciplined in prayer. We must be attentive approaching God if we expect him to pay any attention to us.

Sometimes in human construction projects an entire project can be delayed for months because a single property owner refuses to sell his one little plot of land, a plot that lies at the center of the project. Is there a little plot of ground in your mind that you have refused to turn over to the Grand Architect? Is some resistance on your part forestalling the building of a character in you for which God already has the plans and the means to construct?.

Scripture tells us a lot about the amount of individual discretion we enjoy in prayer. Some pray at wells (Gen. 24:11,12) and others pray on the hillside (Gen. 28:18-20). Hannah prayed silently (1 Sam. 1:13); David prayed on the battlefield (2 Sam 7:18); some pray in the temple (2 Kings 19:14); in bed (Psa. 63:8); standing, like Jeremiah (Jer. 18:20); aloud, like Ezekiel (Ezek. 11:13); in privacy (Matt. 26:39); by the river (Acts 16:13); kneeling, like Paul (Acts 20:36); and on the seashore (Acts 21:5).

A careful study of these incidents shows us how our heavenly Father blesses us through our own capacities to receive and appreciate him. Always remember, however, that God is seeking us, and he began seeking us long before we ever turned our eyes toward him. Consider what our Lord said about God's invitation:

"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for every thing is now ready.'

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, "I have just bought a field, and I must go to see it. Please excuse me."

Another said, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me."

Still another said, "I just got married, so I can't come." The servant came back and reported this to his master.

Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

"Sir," the servant said, "what you ordered has been done and there is still room."

Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet." (Luke 14:16-24, NIV).

God's invitation is to appreciate and respond to the Gospel Calling. *"No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us"* (1 John 4:12, NASB). *"What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'"* (2 Cor. 6:16, NIV). *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me"* (Rev. 3:20, NIV).

A greater distinction must also be made. That is the difference between "faith in prayer," and "prayer in faith." "Faith in prayer" can be presumptuous and clamoring. You may present requests to God and demand his agreement. "Prayer in faith," on the other hand asks all in submission to the will of God and is meaningful to our Father because he is free to do whatever he wants in connection with our pleas.

Unanswered Prayer

What about claims that God does not answer prayer? The Bible itself is full of unanswered prayers (cf., Hab. 1:14,13; 2 Cor. 12:7-9; James 1:5-8). Moses wanted to enter the promised land, but died on Mt. Nebo (Deut. 34:1-4). Jeremiah complained about his disappointments in Lamentations 3:44 and Habakkuk did likewise (1:2). St. Paul had to compromise the best of his missionary work while he suffered a physical handicap (2 Cor. 12:9).

Prayer takes many forms, and in each we see new blessings available to the New Creation:

Adoring Prayer (Psa. 103:1)
Confession (Ezra 9:6)
Thanksgiving (Psa. 30:1-12)
Consecration (Psa. 119:33,34)
Communion (Psa. 139:17,18)

Petition may be viewed as the most "important" phase of prayer. We have many explicit and confident expressions about the value of petitions. *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee"*(Jer 33:3). *"Ask, and it shall be given you"* (Matt. 7:7). *"All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matt. 21:22). *"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father"* (Matt. 18:19).

In view of these quotations it is puzzling to meet the repeated denial of our requests, unless we recognize that "No" is as real an answer to prayer as "Yes." Our knowledge is incomplete and our outlook is narrow. We are often quite unable to foresee the long term consequences of our requests which are made in full sincerity. Sometimes God, in his wisdom, answers us like Jesus answered the mother of Zebedee's sons: *"You don't know what you are asking..."* (Matt. 20:22, NIV).

Prayer and Work

Do not make the mistake of trying to achieve through prayer what can only be achieved through work. The Israelites tried to do this when they left Egypt. You remember how the Israelites had left Egypt and came to the Red Sea. There, with Pharaoh's army chasing after them they faced what they thought to be imminent destruction. Moses prayed to Jehovah for deliverance and his answer must have been very startling indeed: *"Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward"* (Ex. 14:15).

In the days of the temple reconstruction under Nehemiah there was a happy coordination between prayer and labor. Listen to these examples. *"I prayed unto the God of heaven. And I said to the king"* (Neh. 2:4,5). *"We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night"* (Neh. 4:9). *"Remember the Lord. .. and fight"* (Neh. 4:14). These are wonderful examples of prayerful living. Keep the lines of communication open to the throne of grace, but at the same time keep working on your problems until an answer to your petition becomes apparent. Not many people have the urgent, earnest, persistent prayer life represented by Jacob while wrestling with the angel: *"I will not let you go, except thou bless me"* (Gen. 32:26).

"Yes" and "No" are not the only answers to prayer. Another answer God sometimes gives is "Wait." Believers have prayed "Thy Kingdom come" for more than 1900 years and they are still waiting for the fulfillment of that promise. Our Lord taught us to pray for the oneness of the body, *"that they all may be one"* (John 17:21), but for that most desired condition the answer still has been "Wait." These illustrations emphasize that when we have prepared and proven our New Creature by persistent prayer, then our Father can grant us our request. For this reason our Lord placed the searching condition on all our requests. *"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"* (John 14:13, NASB).

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.' In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God" (John 16:23-27, NIV).

When Christ Jesus prepared his disciples for his departure he encountered difficulties typical of unprepared minds. Consider his patience in training them. They had been content with their situations. They looked to him with such simple trust, immense loyalty, and intense love that they neither doubted nor feared' the future. But their hearts were slow to believe more than that.

Philip had asked, *"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"*(John 14:8). There is something pathetic in these very words, suggesting the human heart's natural desire to commune with God. It wasn't unbelief that prompted Philip's question, it was slowness of understanding. How appropriately gentle, therefore, is Jesus' loving rebuke:

"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?" (John 14:9, NIV).

Jesus had been with Philip day after day and yet Philip had not found God's loving character exemplified in Christ. Is this much different than our spiritual denseness about seeing Christ's

character in our brothers and sisters? The more like Christ a person is the more easily they are misunderstood or neglected. Not only in Judea have men stoned their prophets and then raised monuments to their memory after they are dead. Our minds can be so preoccupied with our own lives, or so thoughtless, that we easily judge one another harshly and incorrectly. Sometimes it is only later, after it is too late to change anything, that we realize what opportunities we have missed.

God's Guidance

With the foregoing in mind we can perhaps better appreciate the Prophet's words about the unrequited love of God. *"Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; But they did not know that I healed them"* (Hos. 11:3, NIV). What about the impotent man waiting at the pool for the moving of the waters. Jesus visited him, healed him and went away. John tells us of the man that *"...he that was healed wist not who it was"*(5:13). When the man went to the temple later he found out his physician had been Jesus. How often are our "afterwards" the times when we too learn what God has done for us; the truth of *the words "I will gird you, though you have not known Me"* (Isa. 45:5, NIV).

We never fully comprehend just how much mercy, goodness, and kindness has shone into our lives because of God. We shall know hereafter. We live our lives in blindness to his providence until we are awakened by it, just as Jacob awoke at Bethel saying, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not"* (Gen. 28:16). Though we may be blind to Christ, though we are intermittent in prayer, and fickle in our love, yet he is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Let's pursue this thought further, as we consider our Lord's words: *"He that is not with me is against me"* (Matt. 12:30). Throughout the Master's ministry he asked people to wait, to consider, to count the cost. He wanted us to realize that we are judged by our attitude toward him. The Jews have a tradition about the manna in the wilderness. They say that it did not have one uniform taste, but tasted differently in each man's mouth. How true this is spiritually as well. All our lives we think we are balancing and weighing truth; but in reality truth is evaluating us. Christ sifts us as wheat is sifted from chaff. Even when we think ourselves neutral or indifferent to issues, by that very fact we have made a decision and are being judged by that decision.

Indifference is merely another word for neutrality. When you refuse to commit yourself, or speak about keeping an open mind, it can be that you do not understand the importance of the issue and see no need for a decision. Sometimes you may not be against Christ -- you simply are not for him.

If you open your life to God's guidance you encourage your own receptivity. The furthest reaching consequences come when we commune with our Father and he opens our eyes to the privileges and blessings of living as sons of God.

"Hear, O my people, and I will warn you -- if you would but listen to me, O Israel! ...But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes" (Psa. 81:8, 11-14).

Prayer opens our lives so that God's will can be done in us and through us. We slowly develop the habitual attitude of submission to whatever God's will demands. "Now *they know that everything you have given me comes from you*" (John 17:7, NIV). As we approach our Father, intent upon receiving what he is willing to give, our prayers become to us like a receptive hand. The more conscious we are of his love, the weaker are our fears and uncertainties. Thus may we learn to "*trust him where we cannot trace him.*"

Components of The Lord's Prayer

Praise and thanksgiving
Confidence in God
Acknowledgment of dependence upon God for daily needs
Confidence in his power
Confidence in his goodness
Assurance that he will deliver his child.

Anger

Selected

Anger is wrong when it is fired by base passion. Most men are angry when their interests are challenged, yet they will bear patiently great wrongs inflicted upon others. Anger fired by self -- love, self -- conceit, or self -- will is always despicable. There is such a thing as a noble, godly anger. It is charged by higher impulses than self. The prophets were angered when they heard God's name blasphemed. "I count the enemies of God my enemies," said David; "I hate them with a perfect hatred." The spirit which flushes with resentment at an oath is far better than the spirit which listens with indifference or which laughs with pleasure. "*Abhor that which is evil,*" the Bible says; and no man is safe unless he does. Every child should have such a chivalrous sense of pure, true womanhood that the dirty story, the illicit jest, the raucous scandal would anger him against the telling of such stories. Immorality should awaken our resentment, just as musical discord offends the musically educated ear.

The wrath that comes from self -- esteem, approbateness, combativeness, and greed degrades men and women. Further, it is dangerous and degrading if one's character is beyond being inspired to wrath by conscience, reverence, faith, and love. The wrath of love? Yes, the wrath of love. This is the hottest and divinest wrath of all. This is the wrath of the Lamb which will consume the world's filth in the day when this earth is purified so as by fire. Do not teach your children never to be angry; teach them how to "be ... angry, and sin not" (Eph. 4:26).

The Question Box

How can a Christian overcome discouragement and depression?

Discouragement and depression seem to be characterized by a loss of confidence, occasioned perhaps by some experience or circumstance in our lives where we felt unable to cope adequately with a difficult situation or crisis.

At such times, however, it would be well to recall that of ourselves we can do nothing; and yet, we should believe and echo the Apostle Paul's sentiments: *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13).

Certainly, we are to experience tribulation in this world; but as the Master intimated to his disciples prior to his crucifixion, we are to possess peace and to be of good cheer rather than be discouraged.

It is not the heavenly Father's will that we should be in such a mental state. We are given exceeding great and precious promises. The following steps are offered to help overcome discouragement and depression:

- 1) Verbalize and put into writing what we perceive to be the cause of our depression. This will help give us a sense of focus rather than allowing our minds to wander over nebulous or vague reasons for feeling melancholic.
- 2) Locate and commit to memory specific scriptures which attest that the Father will never leave us nor forsake us if we continue to seek after him and run the race with patience.
- 3) Review scriptures such as Galatians 5:19-26. Categorize the identified source of discouragement to see whether it is caused by the presence of one or more works of the flesh or an insufficiency in the fruits of the spirit.
- 4) Review the volumes, concordances, and other helps to find and unlock biblical helps to deal with the problem diagnosed in No. 3 above.
- 5) Determine by God's grace to consistently use such admonitions and principles to modify our previous reactions to trials which cause discouragement.
- 6) Utilize prayer, personal study, and strength derived from fellowship with others to fortify our resolve to overcome discouragement and depression.
- 7) Express thanks to the heavenly Father for his guidance and supervision of our affairs in this regard, recognizing that if we did not need the experience causing the discouragement he would not have permitted it to occur. Additionally, look for opportunities to assist others who appear discouraged. One can do this by sharing the means by which the Lord helped us to overcome our difficulties.

-- Homer Montague

To answer this question effectively one needs to distinguish, if possible, which factor or combination of factors are the underlying cause of the depression. Our bodies are established by the creator with various cyclical rhythms. One of these is excitement and depression, and it occurs in every person in their daily life. After a period of high excitement, expectation, or pleasant experiences, there will follow a period of depression in which the body stabilizes. This is normal. It only becomes unusual when the depression lingers too long (usually a couple weeks) or becomes severe (encompassing lethargy, seclusion, or suicidal tendencies).

We suggest the following as contributing factors which need to be considered: An injury to the monthly hormonal changes; menopause; a work -- related chemical; diet.

Three more factors follow which need additional comment. Depression occurs when we refuse to admit and to surrender to God for help in recovery. This is properly termed "guilt" and is God's way of prompting our repentance and the reformation of character. When sin is fully dealt with, depression and discouragement disappear by faith in the forgiveness of God. However, never -- think that depression must mean sin. This is just not true.

Depression and discouragement may be partly innate temperament and partly learned behavior. If it is a genetic trait we can do little to have it disappear. Therefore we need to learn to be thankful and to accept this as God's design for our life. This will enable us to use it as a tool and not be crippled by it (Psa. 139:14). Knowing that depression comes easily to those who are very sensitive, quite emotional, or introspective, we need to reach out in our weakness to serve others so that we no longer dwell upon ourselves. Note our Lord Jesus' words, "*...it is more blessed to give than to receive...*" *This is* the basis of effective help to those who dwell upon their own weaknesses and problems too much (Phil. 3:13; 2:14).

The last cause is simply being undernourished, overly tired, or very lonely. When Elijah finished his evangelizing work upon Mt. Carmel, he was discouraged with the angel's simple cure: healthful food and rest (1 Kings 19:48). Similarly, life looks bleak to the very weary. Decisions at such times are harder to make and problems become insurmountable when we are exhausted. The cure is just healthful food and necessary rest. Also, reserve your problem solving and decisions to the early part of the day; no one is as clear and rational at the end of the day. Here we need to heed God's pattern with Adam in the Garden -- the quiet restful communion at day's close.

Do not underestimate the need for a friend to remove loneliness. We were so made by the Creator as to need God's friendship, the friendship of Christ, and then the friendship of our fellow man. The solution then is based upon the cause of our discouragement or depression. Whether we need a chiropractor, a doctor, a modified diet, an acceptance of our selves as we are, an acceptance of the aging process, or a new way to approach life and its complexities, God himself will be glad to guide us to the solution. He personally cares for each of us and wants us to do good. Do not forsake reading his words and seeking him in prayer -- a beautiful source of encouragement. For though he may seem far away, his love never changes (Mal. 3:6; 1 John 4:10).

-- Brian Kuehmichel

Paul gives a prescription in Philippians for depression that has served well for many years (cp. Phil. 2:1-11).

It would seem that what we expect from ourselves and from others can at times lead to what amounts to self pity -- a very dangerous thing. It can become completely debilitating.

If we truly love one another as Christ has loved us, and if we trust in the promise that God loves us -- without question -- then we will not entertain the thoughts that can plague us into depression. We will not condemn ourselves. We can examine our actions and motives and repent of those which are not consistent with being a consecrated Christian believer, but we do not condemn ourselves. On the other hand, we will not condemn others either. Often we expect others, especially loved ones, to do what we think they should without ever having expressed a wish or preference to guide them. To be fair, we cannot expect anyone to do what we wish them to do without giving them the benefit of our thinking. All minds do not think alike. Something which seems very obvious to us may not have crossed the mind of another.

With these thoughts in mind, let us look to Paul's advice:

Do you:

Or do you think:

Do nothing from selfishness

What's in it for me

Do nothing from conceit

I can do this better than anyone

Count others better than yourself

I deserve this more than they

Look to the interests of others

If I play this right, I can get what I want

Take the form of a servant

Let somebody else do it

Finally, the best anyone can do when overtaken by disruptive thoughts is to turn to these words: *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable ... whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things"* (Phil. 4:8, NIV).

-- Arlene Jones D

If Ye Do These Things

"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." - 2 Peter 1:10

by: D.W. Black

The words of our theme text are particularly apropos today. They remind us of the solemn warning which closes our Lord Jesus Christ's sermon on the mount (Mat. 7:24-29).

Wherever one looks among those who claim to be followers of the Master there appears the tendency to ignore plain meanings of the Master's words. We do well to study his words until we are sure we understand their meaning:

Not every one who says to me, "Master, Master," will enter into the kingdom of the heavens; but he who performs the will of that father of mine in the heavens. Many will say to me in that day, "Master, Master, have we not taught in Thy Name? and in thy Name expelled Demons? and in thy Name performed many Wonders?" And then I will plainly declare to them, I never approved of you. Depart from me, you who practise iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23, *Diaglott*).

Perhaps readers who may be familiar with these words still have not been affected strongly enough by them because they have been applied to those often termed "nominal Christians." By so doing one says, in effect, that having been brought into the truth we only need to hold fast certain beliefs separating us from others and all will be well.

On the other hand, if the words are a warning to believers that holiness alone would meet with the Master's approval, how important it is that we clearly understand these words and not rest in a delusive sense of security which accompanies the belief that what we know is of greater importance than what we are. Knowledge is important, but wisdom is far more important. We do not read that Christ is made unto us knowledge: we read that Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and deliverance (cf., 1 Cor. 1:30).

The close of the last century was marked by tremendous advances (for its day) in secular and religious knowledge. Those advances were the results of years of patient study and research by students of science and religion. It would be unfair and unwise to forget the labors of those students and to think that we could have stepped into clear light without the help contributed by each generation of truth -- seekers since the Lord raised up the reformers in the sixteenth century.

For the sake of discussion assume that we are living in the Apostolic Age when Peter wrote his general epistle (2 Pet. 1:1). Ask yourself: Were these Christians deficient in their knowledge of God's plan of the ages? Would their knowledge of the divine plan compare favorably with the knowledge possessed by brethren in, say, the 1900's? If we allow ourselves to be guided by the words of the apostles, we must conclude they were not deficient in knowledge, and further that the knowledge those believers possessed would compare favorably with 1991.

If this be admitted, then it is clear that the knowledge we possess merely puts us on equal terms with brethren who lived during the Apostolic Age of the church. When the apostles fell asleep, error (more or less rapidly) displaced the truth until just before the Reformation. Darkness prevailed over the professed church of God during this period of history. During the interval between the Reformation and our day, truths have been restored to God's people. Today we enjoy the truth as it was taught by the apostles, with the advantage that the pilgrimage of the church is nearly ended and the establishment of the kingdom is near.

The truths which separated the believers in the Apostolic Age from others are the same truths we now appreciate. As the believers of the Apostolic Age were encouraged to make their calling and election sure, so are we. The knowledge they enjoyed would not entitle them to a share in the kingdom, and the knowledge we enjoy will only add to our confusion -- if we fail, diligently, to make our calling and election sure. "*If ye know these things, happy [blessed] are ye if ye do them.*" It should be clear that the greatest danger now facing those in what we call Present Truth is modern day Gnosticism: it is easier to claim superiority to your brother on a point of knowledge than it is to prove your superiority by the excellence of your character.

The great Adversary divided the early church along these lines, and he is pursuing the same policy today -- that this is true can be seen from the history of the last hundred years. Should we not consider one another to provoke unto love and good works? If we have a difference of opinion, we are not at liberty to conclude that because we believe we are right, the Lord has ceased to love our brother. This being so, should we not love our brother more: he is in greater need of our love and of our longsuffering. How could we hope to win over our brother by any other means? We may draw freely from the limitless fountain of our Lord's love, but let us not overlook his words, "*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*" (Matt. 5:7).

Note the comparable experience of the apostle Paul, whose work among the Corinthians is detailed in the eighteenth chapter of Acts. Guided by a vision from the Lord, he worked long and hard in that city to bring many of its citizens to Christ. By his second letter to them there had arisen an opposition to Paul. His reaction to this resistance can bless all in Present Truth today. Paul did not freeze up: either in refusing to deal with them or in not knowing how to counter the situation.

Our mouth is opened toward you, O Corinthians! our heart has been enlarged. You are not straitened in us, but you are contracted in your own tender affections (2 Cor. 6:11-12, *Diaglott*).

In similar circumstances many Christians would feel justified in showing some degree of coolness and reserve. Why did Paul act differently? The answer lies in the truth of Paul's statement: "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" He never forgot that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. It was, therefore, the spirit of Christ in Paul that overlooked every cause for complaint and continued to exercise the love that covers all things. He believed all things; hoped for all things; endured all things.

Savior like a shepherd lead us.
Much we need thy tender care.

Only through the suggestions of the wily one, Satan, would anyone suggest that differences among us are due to the insincerity of others. We are not at liberty to condemn one another. The oneness for which our Master prayed will soon be yours, and to the eyes of our heart an eternity of glory and blessing is drawing ever nearer.

The Glory of God

"The Lord our God hath showed us His glory"

Deuteronomy 5:24 by: C H. Spurgeon

God's design in his works is the manifestation of his own glory. But how shall the glory of God be manifested to fallen creatures like ourselves?

Man's eye is not single: he always has such a sideward glance towards his own honor, has too high an estimate of his own powers, and so is not qualified to behold the glory *of* the Lord. Self must stand out of the way that there may be room for God to be exalted; and this is the reason why he frequently brings his people into trouble and difficulty, that, being made conscious of their own folly and weakness, they may be fitted to behold the majesty of God when he comes to work their deliverance.

He whose life is a smooth path will see little of the glory of the Lord, for he has few occasions of self -- emptying, and hence little suitability for being filled with God's revelation. They who navigate life's little streams and shallow creeks know little about the God of tempests and storms. But they who sail across the great waters see his wonders in the deep. Among the Atlantic waves of sorrow, poverty, temptation and reproach we learn the power of Jehovah. Amid these waves we feel the littleness of man. Thank God if you have been led by a rough road: this has given you your experiences of God's greatness and lovingkindness. Your troubles enrich you with a knowledge to be gained by no other means. Your trials have been the cleft of the rock in which Jehovah set you, as he did his servant Moses, so that you might behold his glory. Praise God that you have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which continued prosperity might have involved, but that in the fight of affliction you have been enabled for the outshining of his glory in his dealings with you.

Trust in God

Christian happiness is proportionate to one's sincerity and depth of trust in God. You may be overwhelmed with troubles. Your plans may go awry. Your good name may be tarnished and your worldly hopes blasted, yet if you have an unimpaired, serene sense of trust you will not be moved. Your peace will flow like a mighty river whose depths and current are undisturbed by any surface splashing.

Nowhere in the Bible is this trust more powerful or sublime than in Habakkuk's prayer:

Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior
(Hab. 3:17,18, NIV).

These words may be sublime oriental poetry, but they are not too strong to express the feelings of one in any climate or period whose mind and heart are stayed on God. When trouble comes and all our earthly supports fail, then our faith is tested. If our trust does not fail us at such times we are happy. Such faith is not too dearly purchased, even if it come at the severest earthly calamity - - doubtless it never comes in any other guise. We should truly be thankful for any circumstance that brings us closer to God and teaches us absolute surrender to him.

Such faith exalts all the human graces and virtues. It deepens the source of our character and widens its domains in our life. By such faith, we are fit to be used by God in any circumstance. In this kind of faith, we have the power to win men from this selfish world over to the life of Christ.

We may have a sound creed and we may be able to defend it by unimpeachable arguments. Yet, if we lack the sweetness and light that are born of pure trust in God our influence as believers will be puny.

It is good to preach Christ. It is better to live him. Allow his influence to flow through you and his character will be revealed in you!

Such trust will shine forth in our eyes. Our lives will distill an aroma so pure that men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Even so, let men be so drawn unto our Lord!

Trust is a fountain of joy and peace which springs up into everlasting life. If we have received this divine inheritance, knowing God as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, and having surrendered our own will, we can appreciate Faber's words:

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumph's at his cost.
All that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be his dear will.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee.
I have no cares, O blessed will!
For all my cares are thin;
I live in triumph, Lord, for thou
Hast made thy triumphs mine.

Lay your hope upon the Rock of Ages. Be strong, for your future is not some dim coincidence, nor a vague dream, nor a wish turning itself into vision. Your future is guaranteed by the God of all past and present. It is settled upon his Word and the brightest of its brightness is to enjoy more of his presence, to possess more of his likeness. That is certain. Therefore, let us live in our hope and reach forward unto the things that lie ahead.

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

from: Good News

The Trinity. Some people say it is a mystery. Others just accept it. Many deny it altogether. Is it real?

Is it error? Is the holy Spirit a person, just like God the Father, and Jesus Christ, as the Trinity teaches? Let's examine Scriptures to see what God's Word says the holy Spirit is. It is the *power of God*. "*Not by might, nor by power [of humans], but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts*" (Zechariah 4:6). "*I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might,*" the prophet Micah declared (Micah 3:8).

It is the spirit of *wisdom and understanding -- of counsel and might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*. "*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*" (Isaiah 11:2). It is a *gift of God*. Peter taught that believers would receive "*the gift of the holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

It is *poured out*. "*It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh*" (Acts 2:17).

To be effective the holy Spirit must be *stirred up*. "*I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God,*" were Paul's instructions to the young evangelist Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6). The spirit of God can be *quenched*. "*Quench not the Spirit*" -- Paul taught the Thessalonian church (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

It is the *begetting power of God*. "*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the holy Spirit*" (Matthew 1:18). "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9).

It is God's *guarantee* to us that he will fulfill his promise to us. "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory*" (Eph. 1:13-14).

It sheds the *love of God* abroad in our hearts. "*And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us*" (Romans 5:5).

It must be *renewed*. "*We having the same spirit of faith ... For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4:13,16).

What consistent testimony do we find in all these scriptures? Not one of them uses characteristics which could even imply that the holy Spirit of God is a person. Does a person do any of these things? Is a person "poured," "quenched," or "renewed"? Consider another fact. If the holy Spirit were a person, didn't Jesus Christ pray to the wrong individual? Throughout the Gospels Christ spoke only to God (as his Father) -- not once does he ever speak to the holy Spirit.

Scripture testimony explodes the Trinity! If Scripture is our authority, we cannot accept the Trinity doctrine. What do you believe: the teachings of men or the teaching of scripture?

"What a wonderful God we have -- he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? so that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us."

-- 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 TLB

Let not any one say that he cannot govern his passions, nor hinder them from breaking out and carrying him to action; for what he can do before a prince or a great man, he can do alone, or in the presence of God if he will.

-- John Locke

Honor to the true man ever, who takes his life in his hands, and at all hazards speaks the word which is given to him to utter, whether men will bear or forbear,• whether the end thereof is to be praise or censure, gratitude or hatred.

-- J.G. Whither

Christians are like ripening corn: the riper they grow, the lower they bend their heads.

How To Be Happy

Keep your heart free from hate and your mind free from worry, live simply, expect little, give much, sing often, pray always, forget self, think of others and their feelings, fill your heart with love, scatter sunshine.

These are tried links in the golden chain of contentment.

The Wisdom of Divine Prophecy

Observe, in the first place, the union of the known and the unknown in this great problem of the [second] advent consummation; a union exactly fitted to inspire the church with sacred curiosity to search diligently and constantly for its solution. For just as there is in revelation a dogmatic certainty as to the fact of Christ's return, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," so there is a dogmatic uncertainty as to the time of his return: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father." By this combination of the revealed and the unrevealed, perennial interest and inspiring search are ensured, which were utterly impossible if either of these elements were wanting. Take away the certainty as to the fact of Christ's coming, and tell us that he may never return, and at once the wing of hope is paralyzed, and the eye of vigilance closed; take away the uncertainty as to the time of Christ's coming, and tell us that a definite thousand years of millennial blessedness stands between us and the advent; or to have told the early disciples that at least eighteen centuries must elapse before their Lord should come back -- and looking for his immediate return were utterly impossible, so that the watchman's vigil must cease and the virgin's lamp be quenched. Therefore, by a wise combining of the known and the unknown factors in the construction of prophecy, there have been secured the most powerful stimulant to watchfulness, and the most salutary check to presumption.

By the succession of prophetic fulfillments the same result is promoted. It is a part of the divine plan to give an onward look to all predestined events; prophecy no sooner becomes history than history in turn becomes prophecy, accomplished facts passing into foretypes of greater facts to come. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me," said Jesus in his last discourse with his disciples, "and again, a little while, and ye shall see me" (John 16:16).

-- A. J. Gordon from *Ecce Homo* L

The rich man is not one who is in possession of much, but one who gives much.

-- St. John Chrysotom: *Homilies*

When I am with God

*My fear is gone
In the great quiet of God
My troubles are as the pebbles on the road,
My joys are like the everlasting hills.*

-- Walter Rauschenbush

Our suffering is not worthy the name of suffering. When I consider my crosses, tribulations, and temptations, I shame myself almost to death, thinking what are they in comparison to the sufferings of my blessed Savior Christ Jesus?

-- Martin Luther

BIG; Astronomers say they've discovered a "Great Wall" of the universe that is 500 million light - years long. Composed of thousands of galaxies, not including our Milky Way, the immense structure is 200 million light years wide and 15 million light years thick, says Harvard astronomy professor Margaret Geller, part of a team that has been mapping the universe. The findings, reported in Science, are based on telescope observations of 4000 galaxies made at Arizona's Mount Hopkins observatory.

Entered Into Rest

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